

JOHN ANDREWS—  
COWARD

... By Marvin Dana

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Roundabout him in a straggling parallelogram stood the ungainly wooden house of a Missouri county seat. Beyond lay the level brown of prairies, shot with the ochre of ripening grain, gray blue where it merged into a horizon's sky of appalling bronze. His sight was blurred by dancing currents of hot air. In the shade of the hotel porch the thermometer registered 110 degrees, and there yet remained two sweltering hours before sunset.

"Thank heaven, I've inspected the last acre and can start for New York in the morning," was his thought. Instinctively his hand touched his pocket and her letter. He smiled, then frowned.

"Am I a coward?"

A paragraph in her letter had started the self-inquisition.

"I shall be so glad when you are safe home again," it ran, "even though I have no real cause for alarm. You are so big and strong and brave, and I love you for it. I could never love a coward."

Was he one? Yes—no! A flush not born of the sun flooded his face. His mind traveled back twenty-four hours, and he cursed his weakness, his timidity, which he had never realized until that awful storm had broken. It was when the terrific lightning, peculiar to this region, had played about him that he had suddenly found himself trembling, gasping with horror. The memory of those moments still sickened him and filled him with contemptuous self-hate.

The proprietor of the hotel came out and balanced on two legs of a chair beside his guest.

"Reckon we'll have another bit of a shower tonight," he drawled amiably.

The careless words filled his listener with dumb anguish, half fear, half shame. Must he again endure that racking torment—the blue glare of electricity, the deadly crackling of the bolts, the horrible realization that multiple death mocked him from every side?

"I don't see any clouds," he ventured.

"You can tell weather same as you can cloth, more by feelin' than by looks. I've been forty years in these parts, an' I calculate we'll have it hammer an' tongs before midnight. Lucky if a regular cyclone don't blow along with it."

"Does lightning do much damage around here?"

"Burns a lot of barns mostly; but, takin' it one time an' another, we've had quite a few folks killed, 'bout twenty in my time. It's a nice, easy death, but I don't like cyclones. One hit me, an' that was enough. The darned thing killed off half the town, includin' all my best friends an' four mules, which was all I was worth. Cyclones, blast 'em, always come in the night, when you can't see 'em."

The listener drew his breath sharply.

"But how do you tell a cyclone, even in daytime?"

"Well, Mr. Andrews, you can always tell it because the sky looks like nothin' you've ever seen before—yellow, green an' ornery. An' if it's comin' your way you'll see what the papers call a funnel shaped cloud, but what looks more like a big balloon, dancin' along. When the gale raises an' that balloon seems to stop bouncin', but stands still, gettin' bigger an' bigger, you dust for a cellar. It's close."

"Do all the places here have cyclone caves?"

"Everybody in town ain't got one, but there's enough to go round. Want to see mine?"

Any diversion from his mental anguish and self-pity was welcome to Andrews, and he followed his host to the middle of the back yard, where he saw a mound of earth. In the end nearest there was a swinging shutter, which the landlord raised. Within was space for perhaps six persons comfortably placed by crowding compactly. Twice or even thrice that number might seek refuge for a limited time. The odor of damp earth suggested the grave, and again Andrews shuddered.

By the time he sought his room at 10 o'clock that night Andrews had argued himself into believing that this new terror of storm and wind was a constitutional peculiarity for which he was not morally culpable, and exhausted by heat and mental strain he quickly dropped asleep.

He awoke with the tramp of doom bursting his eardrums. The crash of a falling thunderbolt brought him to his feet, and he stood dazed amid the lurid radiance of the lightning. In an ecstasy of fear he sprang to the window and closed it. Then he drew the shade and struck a match. Two flickered and died in his trembling hand before he could light the lamp. In a very spasm of horror he sat huddled on his bed. He thought of no one and nothing save himself and death!

But there remained another note yet to be sounded in the gamut of his terror. Suddenly the hotel commenced to shake and reel under the assaults of the wind. With cringing dismay he recalled the landlord's warning against cyclones in the night. At any moment one might burst upon him, resistless, remorseless, overwhelming. Within him rose the instinct of flight. To the cave, to safety!

Mechanically in the midst of his alarms he dressed himself, and as he stepped into the dark hall he recoiled before a sudden glare of lightning.

He was safe at last, and a great joy of salvation welled in his heart. For a time he slept, waking with limbs cleared and body refreshed. He listened intently, but no sound reached him. He crawled from his refuge, but the thought of returning to the room where he had suffered such mental tortures was hateful to him. He crossed the yard, climbed the fence and started toward the outskirts of the town. The air was of a hue strange to him, sullenly luminous, and he had gone not more than a quarter of a mile when he saw to the south, directly opposite from where the storm had come, a menacing bank of restless clouds. They were ablaze with ragged fire. The boom of thunder rose afresh. Yes; there could be no further question. A second tempest was approaching. Already the sickness of terror was upon him, the nausea of cowardice, and he again faced toward his refuge, the cave! But something in the sky held him fascinated, something shaped like a titanic top, hung from the heavens and spun by demon hands. Then it stopped moving, growing larger and larger.

What had the landlord said that afternoon? When it stops "bouncin'," it's close!

He turned and fled for his life, but even as he ran a new thought came to him. It was not yet morning. None in the sleeping town knew of the doom racing toward their homes. He had a pitiful vision of shattered houses, littered with mutilated bodies, women and children caught from their slumbers in the crunching maw of the cyclone.

He forgot himself and—fear. He had passed the cyclone cellar and was rushing through the hall of the hotel.

"Cyclone! Cyclone! To the cave for your lives!"

The house sprang into instant life, but before the first startled guest reached the main floor Andrews was again in the street. He carried the dinner gong, which he had seized in an inspiration born of anxiety. Between each shout of warning he drummed and, quivering alarms on the eloquent brass.

He made the round of three sides of the square when of a sudden a mighty roaring was all about him. He paused, bewildered, and a crashing thunder-bolt seemed to strike his temple, a burning splendor blinded his eyes. Then an invisible power struck full against him, seized him and wrapped him in its crushing embrace, bore him aloft, tossed him here and there and finally into a blackness that swallowed him completely.

Three days later he woke to see an angel bending over him. No; it was flesh and blood, after all. It was she. He blinked at her uncertainly.

"You are a hero!" She spoke softly, with shining eyes.

Then he remembered.

"Were many saved?"

"All," she answered proudly. "Those you saved roused the others, and only a few, who sought refuge in cellars instead of caves, were hurt by falling timbers. But you suffered most. Oh, it was noble!"

Andrews spoke with sudden vigor.

"Not I am a coward. The storms frightened me shamefully. You can't understand how I quivered and trembled like a child. I am not worthy of you. I had already hidden in the cave that night, I came out only when I thought all danger was over. The rest was an accident."

He stopped, exhausted, and she bent close to him.

"Don't talk that way, dearest. You are not a coward, but a conqueror of fear, and you will be my hero always."

Must Pick the Bone.

As is well known, slavery existed in a small way in Massachusetts in the early days. Slaves were often freed by will at the death of their master, and not infrequently aged and unhealthy servants were released in order to save the expense of their maintenance. The unfortunate freedman then became a charge on the town. So frequent did such cases become that the general court of 1703-4 passed an act which prohibited the freeing of servants except upon giving bonds to save the public from future charges. The historian of Maiden cities an incident:

One of the old esquires of Maiden had a slave who had been in his family until he was about seventy years of age. Perceiving that there was not much more work left in the old man, his owner sent for him one day and addressed him in pompous fashion.

"You have been a faithful servant to me and my father before me," he said. "I have long been thinking what I should do to reward you for your services, and I have decided to give you your freedom. You are your own master; you are your own man."

But the old negro shook his grizzled head and, with a sly glance which showed that he saw through his master's intentions, quietly replied:

"No, no, massa; you eat de meat, and now you must pick de bone."

Early Methods of Curing Skins.

The original process of curing skins was probably the simple one of cleaning and drying them. Removal of the hair by maceration in water seems to have been common among the very early tribes, and one writer has suggested that the idea was obtained from the natural process of depilation. They must certainly have been familiar with it in the case of drowned animals, where maceration can be plainly observed.

Following this smoke, sour milk, oil and the brains of the animals themselves were found efficacious. Many of these primitive methods are employed.

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## FREAK HOUSES.

Dwellings in Which Ladders Took the Place of Stairways.

Years ago a story was told of a naval officer who wanted a house built to please his own taste in every detail. He drew the plans himself, placed them in the hands of a builder and instructed him to see that they were carried out in every detail. Then he went to sea for a year's cruise. When he returned home the house had been completed with the utmost regard for the plans and specifications left by the officer. He was taken through the first floor and expressed the utmost pleasure in everything he saw.

"Now," he said, "we will go upstairs and see the second floor."

"Come right out this way where we have a ladder," replied the builder.

The seafaring man was astonished. He had planned the house with the greatest care, but forgot to provide for a stairway.

The story of the naval officer has never had a certificate of genuineness attached to it, but an actual case in which a house has been built without a stairway is on record in Washington. It finally became the home of the late John Boyle, who was for many years chief clerk of the navy department and who died in 1854, leaving a large estate. The house in question stood on the site now occupied by a brewery below the naval observatory. It was a pretentious old mansion, located in what was a very stylish section during the days of the elder John Boyle, who came to this country in the early years of the nineteenth century. The record is not clear as to why the house was constructed without a staircase, but there is no doubt about the fact.—Washington Star.

## GLOVES IN EARLY DAYS.

They Were Often Made to Represent the Man Who Wore Them.

In the early days everything was not regulated for the people, as it is now, by the government and the law courts. Europe was still young then, and people had rough and ready means of dealing with one another, of buying and selling or giving goods and property and settling disputes. A glove, as it was very close-fitted to a man's hand, came in course of time to be looked upon as taking the place of the hand itself, and sometimes took the man's place and was made to represent him.

For example, to open a fair it was necessary then to have the consent and protection of the great lord in whose country it was going to be held. Those who wished to open the fair would come to the nobleman and petition him to be present. He might be very busy, or bored at the idea of having to go, yet he would know that it must be opened or his people would be discontented. So he would say to the leaders of the people: "No, my trusty fellows, I can't open the fair in person, but I will send my glove to do it. You all know my glove. Nobody has one like it in the country. It is the one my lady mother embroidered for me in colored silks and silver wire, and it has a deep violet fringe. You can hang it above the entrance of your fair grounds as a sign that you are acting with my permission. If any one disputes your right or touches his master's glove I will attend to him; that's all!" So the glove would travel in state to open the fair.—St. Nicholas.

## Old Time Carving Terms.

In an old number of a magazine issued more than a century ago we lighted upon a list of different terms used at "tables of elegance" in the days when Queen Charlotte came as the bride of the young and handsome king. From this list it would appear that nothing in the way of game was to be carved. The correct phrase was to "cut up" a turkey, to "rear" a goose, to "unlace" a hare or rabbit, to "wing" a partridge or a quail, to "allay" a pheasant, to "dismember" a heron, to "thigh" a woodcock, to "display" a crane and to "lift" a swan. Beef and mutton were "carved," of course, and the sporting men prided themselves by using appropriate sporting terms when the spoil of their morning's work made its final appearance on the table.—Modern Society.

## Our Double Selves.

In a form of experience which is almost as common as ordinary dreaming we see that the semi-somnolent self possesses a faculty not always given to the waking self. Compared with my own waking self, for instance, my half asleep self is almost a personality of genius. He can create visions that the waking self can remember but cannot originate and cannot trace to any memory of waking impressions. These apparently trivial things thus point to the existence of almost wholly submerged potentialities in a mind so everyday, commonplace and, so to speak, superficial as mine.

## All in the Expression.

Hamlet—When I asked Brown how he liked my Othello he said it was all that one could wish.

Hamlet—Yes; he told me the same thing, only he expressed it differently.

Hamlet—How's that?

Hamlet—Well, when I asked him how he liked it he said he certainly got all he wanted of it.—Indianapolis Sun.

Her Experience.

Professor—In China criminals are often sentenced to be kept awake until insanity and death result. Now, how do you suppose they keep them from falling asleep? Little Girl (oldest in a small family)—I expect they give 'em a baby to take care of.

If it were not for bores it would be very difficult for us to realize what eternity is.—New Orleans Times-Demo-

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